

The Interpretations of World War II in the Calvinist (Reformed) Church in the Hungarian Countryside¹

Interpretace druhé světové války v kalvínské (reformované) církvi na maďarském venkově

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Summary: It is a simple and known truth that the Christian Churches played the most important role in the formation of the world view of the society lived in the villages and small towns in the Hungarian countryside. This paper shows some relevant examples, how the local Calvinist pastors interpreted the meanings of war in the countryside, how could they give consolation for the religious rural inhabitants in the small and closed communities. The results based on the primary ecclesiastical sources, esp. church reviews and materials of preach. The Calvinist church in general followed and served the nationalistic state propaganda of the interwar Hungarian state.

Abstrakt: Jde o jednoduchou a známou pravdu, že při formování pohledu na svět obyvatel vesnic a malých měst maďarského venkova hrály nejdůležitější roli křesťanské církve. Článek prezentuje několik relevantních příkladů, jak místní kalvínské pastoři interpretovali významy války na venkově, jak mohli poskytnout útěchu religiózním rolnickým obyvatelům v malých a uzavřených komunitách. Výsledky vychází z hlavních církevních pramenů, zvláště z církevních novin a textů kázání. Kalvínská církev obvykle sledovala a sloužila nacionalistické národní propagandě meziválečného maďarského státu.

Keywords: Calvinist Church; Hungarian state in the interwar period; pastors and ministers; interpretations of war; ecclesiastical teachings; church press; war propaganda

Klíčová slova: kalvínská církev; Maďarský stát v meziválečném období; pastoři a faráři; interpretace války; církevní učení; církevní tisk; válečná propaganda

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My paper specifically seeks an answer to the question: What did World War II mean according to the ministers and leaders of the Hungarian Calvinist church, with special regard to those living in the countryside?² When the impact that wars have on the thinking of the members of society is investigated in general, one may come across different approaches and interpretations according to whose viewpoint one adopts as the target of investigation. A lot of research has been done especially in recent historiography into the problems of 'everyday life during the war' or 'war through the eye of everyday people', primarily as reflected in the notes and diaries of everyday people.³ In order to give an answer to the research question, first, an overview should be given of the main landmarks in Hungary's history and the most important parameters of the Hungarian Calvinist church.

In case of Hungary, in order to interpret the events of World War II, it is indispensable to have an overview of the history of the preceding twenty years as every war story is closely related to the events in the 1920s and 1930s. Hungary was one of the countries which lost World War I. At the end of October 1918, there was a bourgeois revolution but the independent, democratic republic could not achieve consolidation, which led to the putsch (coup d'état) of communists copying the Soviet model in March 1919. In August 1919, the military occupation supported by the Entente powers put an end to communist rule, and power was seized by Admiral Miklós Horthy in 1920. Formally, the Kingdom of Hungary was restored with Horthy as its first man as governor. Hungary between the two world wars is described as the 'Horthy regime', which comes from his name. The Horthy regime was an essentially undemocratic, authoritarian system in which there were several political parties, parliamentary elections were held, and certain freedoms were ensured in a restricted way but it was impossible to change the political system as the political forces attached to Horthy had overwhelming influence. The most important element of the system was represented by the unfair Trianon peace treaty, closing World War I, which was signed in June 1920. 'Historical' or 'old' Hungary, a multiethnic country, was deprived of about two third of its territory and population, and in addition to the regions where ethnic minorities represented the majority, several million ethnic Hungarians were also taken over by the new states (Romania,

² We can not speak about wide spread special literature on this topic in foreign languages. (Nevertheless it is quite right in the case of Hungarian language ecclesiastical history, too.) The current and detailed research on these questions: BANK, Jan – GEVERS, Lieve, Churches and Religion in the Second World War, c.d. London et al., 2016. s. 190–191., 130., 460–464. Most of the publications are focusing the events and the problems of connections between the Reformed Churches and the persecution of the Jews, e.g.: BRAHAM, Randolph L., The Politics of Genocide, c.d. New York, 1981. Vol. 2., s. 1041–1045.

³ See e.g. LUKACS, John, The Last European War, c.d. New Haven – London, 2001.

Czechoslovakia and the future Yugoslavia). Right from the beginning, the most important objective of the Horthy regime was the restoration of the old borders of 'historical' Hungary.

The Horthy regime can be regarded as a conservative, right wing political system which had its own, generally prevailing 'Christian-nationalistic' ideology. Its essence was that it basically blamed the tragedy that the Hungarian state encountered in Trianon on 19th century liberalism. The regime was in close connection with the 'historical' Christian churches (Roman Catholic, Calvinist and Lutheran), and was characterized by anti-Semitism from the very beginning.⁴

In the 1930s, the conservative Horthy regime came closer and closer to Nazi Germany as there was hope that the revision of the borders could be achieved with Hitler's help. Following the Munich agreement in autumn 1938, Germany and Italy passed the 'first Vienna award', which attached the regions of South Slovakia populated by ethnic Hungarians to Hungary. Upon the collapse of the second Czechoslovakian republic in March 1939, the Hungarian army occupied the Subcarpathian region. When World War II broke out in September 1939, Hungary was a neutral country, however, it became more and more interested in the success of the axis powers. The second Vienna award in August 1940 gave Northern Transylvania back from Romania to Hungary. The country was in the ecstasy of revisionism, and Horthy was referred to everywhere as 'the man who gained territories for the country'. In April 1941, Hitler required Horthy to participate in the military campaign against Yugoslavia so Hungary became a belligerent party, and in exchange, gained more new territories. A few days after Germany attacked the Soviet Union, Hungary joined the war, definitively committing itself on Hitler's side.

In order to understand the events later, it is important to mention that from 1941, the war was waged far from the borders of Hungary, with no significant events affecting the country. For the public, the war meant the increasing difficulty of getting the necessary supplies, the drafts and news about casualties in remote front lines. In January 1943, several hundred thousand Hungarian soldiers died at the River Don, and the advances of the Soviet Union claimed an ever larger number of casualties. It was an important event that in March 1944, the German army invaded Hungary but left the Horthy regime and the head of state in power. This was followed by the tragic destruction of the Hungarian Jewish community, already severely deprived of their rights: as a matter of a few weeks, the Hungarian authorities deported over 400,000 Jews to concentration camps from the provinces. At that time, the anti-

⁴ See e.g. HANEBRINK, Paul A., *In Defense of Christian Hungary*, c.d. London, 2006.

fascist coalition regularly bombed Hungarian cities and railway lines, which meant that from remote events, the war became everyday reality for the population more and more. Due to the advance of the Soviet Red Army, Hungary also tried to get out of the war, which, however, proved to be an aborted attempt. On 15 October, 1944, the Germans dismissed Horthy, and gave the rule over to the Hungarian right extremists, who declared total war against the Soviets. As a result, Hungary's territory turned into a battlefield and war entered people's homes. The country became a heap of rubble, and the Soviet army plundered and deported a considerable part of the population. The military events only ended in April 1945.

Let me present the subject of my research briefly. The Hungarian Calvinist church was the second largest Hungarian church, to which about one fifth of the population belonged:⁵

	1920	1930	1941*	1941**
Roman Catholic	63,9	64,8	65,7	55,0
Greek Catholic	2,2	2,3	2,5	11,6
<i>Calvinist</i>	20,9	20,9	20,8	18,9
Greek Orthodox	0,6	0,5	0,4	3,8
Lutheran	6,2	6,1	6,0	5,0
Unitarian	0,1	0,1	0,1	0,4
Jewish	5,9	5,1	4,3	4,9
Other	0,2	0,2	0,2	0,4
All	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0

From 1920, it represented one of the most important supports of the Horthy regime, relying on significant national traditions. It is important to remark that Horthy himself was also a Calvinist. The Christian churches were present in people's everyday life and on every level of the life of the state. A considerable number of the associations organizing the life of the society came into being on a religious basis with several of them working in every village for men, women, youngsters, etc. It is important to mention that between the two world wars, almost two third of the country's population was made up by people living in villages in the countryside:⁶

	Budapest	Countryside towns	Countryside villages	All
1930	16,6	19,6	63,8	100,0
1941	18,4	20,2	61,4	100,0

A considerable number of people living in the provinces hardly read newspapers and had no opportunity to listen to the radio so had no access to any information about the 'outside world'. For them, the church was not simply a religious institution but also a primary information source. At that time, there was also a significant difference between ministers

⁵ BALOGH, Margit, A Horthy-korszak egyházai, c. d. Szekszárd, 1997, s. 338. * 'Trianon' territory (between borders of 1920–1938); ** Bigger territory (including reannaxations of 1938–1941)

⁶ DÁNYI, Dezső, Magyarország népessége, c. d. Szekszárd, 1997, s. 151.

working in towns and in villages as the former were better informed, could go to the theatre or cinema, could get books more easily, etc.

At the same time, most of the churches and congregations in the provinces were able to publish internal printed publications or newspapers which did not only record church events but also contained religious texts as well as writings concerning religious life.⁷ These congregation papers were usually written by clergymen, ministers or the lay leaders of the church – so it is reasonable to assume that, for example, in the years of World War II, the subjects of sermons made from the pulpit were the same as the topics of these publications. As a matter of fact, the Calvinist church often held meetings for ministers where there were 'methodological' debates about how to preach to people about the war. Based on my research, I should like to show through these texts how the war appeared in the interpretation of Hungarian Calvinist ministers living in the provinces.⁸

To start with, three general statements should be made: 1. The interpretation of the war formed by ministers living in villages in the provinces did not differ from the opinion of church leaders and bishops, they only represented its more easily intelligible version. 2. Calvinist ministers basically condemned the war, considering the mass killing of people, suffering and destruction to be contrary to the teaching of the Bible. 3. At the same time, they remained extremely loyal to the Horthy regime until the end, always supporting with their sermons what the Hungarian state was declaring. And as Hungary became Hitler's political, and then military ally, the church had to reconcile the message of the gospel with war propaganda. Ministers interpreted Christianity from a special national viewpoint, and this was what they passed on to their congregations. Different views could only be found in a narrow circle of theologians but practically nowhere among the public in the provinces.

Between 1938 and 1941, one of the most frequent topics was territorial revisionism. Ministers reacted to territorial increase with exultation, interpreting the Trianon peace treaty as the 'Babylon captivity' of the Hungarian nation and the process started by the first Vienna award as liberation or even as God's judgment or justice. The interpretation which identified

⁷ About the ecclesiastical press, currently: JAKAB, Attila, The perception of Jews in the Hungarian Catholic and Reformed churches' press, c.d. 2016.; ERDŐS, Zoltán, The Jewry as reflected by the ecclesiastical press, c.d. 2016.

⁸ We have used several ecclesiastical papers from countryside, e.g. *Egyházi Híradó* ['Church News', Budafok], *Református Egyházi Híradó* ['Calvinist Ecclesiastical News', Miskolc], *Sárospataki Református Lapok* ['Reformed Papers from Sárospatak'], *Világosság*, *Zempléni Református Lapok* ['Light', 'Zemplén Reformed Papers', Sátoraljaújhely], *Szatmári Református Híradó* ['Reformed News from Szatmár', Szatmárnémeti], *Dunántúli Protestáns Lap* ['Protestant Paper from Transdanubia', Pápa] etc. The material of ecclesiastical meetings was published in *Lelkészegyesület* ['Pastor Association'] and the diaries of the general assemblies of dioceses. Remark: in general the interpretations of war were very similar in other 'historical' Churches, see e.g.: FAZEKAS, Csaba, The Roman Catholic Church and the Extreme Right-wing Ideologies in Hungary, c.d. 2015.

Jesus Christ with Hungary was not rare, either, saying that Hungary had been buried in the same way as Christ after the crucifixion but there was resurrection, so territorial revision had been God's reward to Christian Hungarians against 'godless, guilty' states. ('Heavy stones were put at the entrance of our grave, and such strict guards were ordered to keep an eye on us that we would never have been able to get out from there. But then where did Czechoslovakia and Romania go, and what became of Yugoslavia? They are lying in the grave they dug for us. Isn't it God's miracle? God's hands loosened the stones, and then came the words: Hungarians, come out of your grave.'⁹) After the territory revision, governor Miklós Horthy was even more frequently mentioned among Calvinists in the provinces so that a real cult was built around his person. They were convinced that Horthy had been sent by God to keep Hungary awake after the Trianon peace treaty, that he was 'the leader of the Hungarian nation ordered by Divine Providence',¹⁰ whose wise decisions were due to his Christian faith and the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Until 1941, Hungary appeared in the sermons as the isle of peace amidst a world in flames. Pastors also considered this to be God's present, and they mostly expressed enthusiasm about German victories. They presented the victims of German war successes (earlier Czechoslovakia, later France, Belgium and Britain) as guilty nations justly punished by God. (They depicted them as conceited nations, greedy for money and betraying Christianity.) On the other hand, Hungarians have been good Christians since Trianon – they said – therefore, God rewards Hungary with its old borders and peace. ('The three largest civilized nations of West Europe are killing one another with immense determination. How many heartbreaking tragedies result from this mass extermination. Inestimable values and thousand-year-old cultures are destroyed, and we can almost hear the sobbing of orphans and young widows, and the destruction of war is shown by smoke and rubble in the place of cities. We, Hungarians know this better than any other nation as no matter how much these western nations have been suffering, all this is nothing against the deep Hungarian suffering of 26 years.'¹¹) In the first events of the war, which did not affect Hungary, they also saw an example that Calvinist believers should live an even more devoted Christian life. In the winter of 1940, they showed immense sympathy towards the Finns, fighting against Soviet

⁹ BOGDÁN, Gyula, A szemünk előtti csodák, ['Miracles in front of our Eyes'] Egyházi Híradó, 1941. May. (Gyula Bogdán: pastor, Kispeszt-Wekerletelep.) The last sentence is a biblical paraphrase, reference for the Lazarus' resurrection: John 11,43.

¹⁰ B.J. [BOROS, Jenő], A szabadulás napja, ['Day of Liberation'] Szatmári Református Híradó, 4 September 1943. (Jenő Boros: pastor, Szatmárnémeti.)

¹¹ DEMJÉN, István, Isten kezében, ['In the Arms of God'] Egyházi Híradó, 1940. június. (István Demjén: pastor, Budafok.)

aggression in the 'winter war'. (In addition to the radical anticommunism of the Horthy regime, the reasons for this sympathy were Hungarian and Finnish belonging to the same language family and Protestant solidarity alike.) Furthermore, at that time, clergymen had no doubt that the future Europe would be formed by the victory of the Germans, the reason of which they saw in the fact that Hitler had forged 'a spiritual unity' of the German nation, which was in contrast to the liberal and individualistic West Europe. ('The new condition of the world will be created by the new peace treaty which will be dictated by national socialist Germany. The other European countries will be forced to adopt a similar lifestyle or set up a system along identical principles. One has to be blind not to see that it will be so.'¹²)

From 1941, Hungarian soldiers also fought in the war on the side of the Germans. The Hungarian Calvinists fully adopted the related nationalist state propaganda, particularly the idea that Hungary was waging a just, self-protecting war in which it did not take part out of its own will but had been forced to participate. They declared that it was not the Germans but the Soviet Union, depicted as Antichrist, which had committed aggression against Christian Europe, which was only conducting a preventive strike under German leadership. ('When seeing through Bolshevik designs, the genial leader of the German nation prevented and averted the devastating attack with quick and hard strikes, time came for us, Hungarians, too, to unsheathe our swords against the Batu Khan of our age and his fanaticised hordes.'¹³) It has always been a central idea in Hungarian nationalist thinking that the country has been 'Europe's bulwark' (bastion) and the 'defender of Christian Europe' since the Middle Ages, up to the present. Of course, it was illogical even in view of this how a 'defensive' war could be waged several thousand kilometres away, on the Russian steppe so Calvinist ministers spoke a lot about World War II being the apocalyptic fight of two spiritual superpowers, the life and death struggle between Christians and the enemies of faith. ('Hungary, which has always been the bulwark of Christian European culture, is waging a self-defensive war again now. On the side of the nations defending the most sacred interests of the civilized part of mankind, it had to spring to arms against the northern ghost of atheism, which threatened to destroy everything that is sacred to us: the homeland, the family, Christian faith and European culture. In this struggle, Hungarian national interests are united with European interests because it was among the first objectives of the attack of Bolshevism to annihilate Hungary. It

¹² GÁL, Lajos, Az új világhelyzet mennyiben érinti egyházunk nemzeti misszióját? ['How the New Situation of World Concerns the National Mission of our Church?'] Lelkészegyesület, 5 April 1941. s. 53–55. (Lajos Gál: pastor, Tiszakürt.)

¹³ From Curator Károly Csajághy's speech. – A Veszprémi Református Egyházmegye 1942. évi augusztus hó 27-én Veszprém városában tartott rendes közgyűlésének jegyzőkönyve, ['Diary of the General Assembly of the Reformed Dioece of Veszprém on 27 August 1942.'] KOVÁCS, Lajos (ed.), Pápa, 1943. s. 7.

was the law of self-defense that put the weapons in our hands, and we are also aware that without the victory of the axis powers, our existence and undisturbed life cannot be ensured against the red monster and that our destiny is most closely connected to the destiny of our fellows in arms.’¹⁴) In a life and death struggle, nobody can remain neutral, and it is not only an opportunity but also a real obligation for Hungary as an attacked party to take part in the anti-Soviet war. The war was often depicted as a ‘crusade’ directed by God and therefore, they were sure about victory, which only depended on how good Christians the people were who went to the war and stayed at home. Thus, the most important interpretation of war is: it is horrible and devastating but unavoidable, and sacrifices must be made for victory. (‘We had to spring to arms for the respect for God’s name, in the defense of His country and for the security of the Hungarian nation. God has given us this land again and again so it is the duty of our nation to ensure God’s rule in this land. [...] This is a sacrifice for the homeland and through it, for God. Sacrifice like that of Abraham to test the faith of the bereaved.’¹⁵ ‘It is our unshaken belief that the blessed outcome of the horrible war will be Satan’s bad failure and the destruction of communism.’ ‘The Hungarian army entered the battlefield to protect Christ’s cause and Christian Hungarian culture.’¹⁶)

War metaphors became regularly used in sermons. The everyday life of Christians was compared to that of the soldiers fighting in the front lines, and it was emphasized that in God’s eyes, it was as important that the believers in the hinterland should do their best as the fact that those fighting with weapons in the Russian steppe should do the same. The life of the hinterland was often called ‘internal front line’, the cave of King David in the Bible ‘shelter’, and the armies fighting against each other were identified with parties in the militant stories in the Old Testament. (‘But there is also another battlefield: the front line in the soul. Every soul is called out to this battlefield to fight their own fight. As gradually, all the nations get involved in the war or at least, have to take sides openly, every created soul gets involved in the spiritual fights of these days.’¹⁷) The biblical quotations in the sermons were commonly used to serve war propaganda. The Calvinist pastors always use biblical verses in their

¹⁴ From Curator Miklós Jókay-Ihász’s speech. – Curator. A Pápai Református Egyházmegye Pápán, 1942. évi augusztus hó 7-én tartott évi rendes közgyűlésének jegyzőkönyve, [‘Diary of the General Assembly of the Reformed Dioece of Pápa on 27 August 1942.’] LAMPÉRT, Lajos (ed.), Pápa, 1942. s. 5–6.

¹⁵ KOZMA, Tibor, A háború, mint ígihirdetésünket meghatározó alkalomrendszer, [‘The War as an Occasion System for the Ecclesiastical Preaches.’] Lelkészegyesület, 9 April 1943. s. 50–51. (Tibor Kozma: pastor: Árpástó.)

¹⁶ KÖVÉR, Pál, Kereszteshadjárat. [‘Crusade’] Sárospataki Református Lapok, 20 September 1941. (Pál Kövér: pastor, Ziliz.)

¹⁷ [s.a.], Helyzetjelentés a lelki frontról. [‘Report from the Spiritual Front’] Református Egyházi Értesítő, 16 September 1941.

writings and speeches. In the years of the World War II the biblical verses became foundations for demonstrating the good goals of the military propaganda of the Hungarian state. E.g. a pastor in a countryside small town put the question in 1942 Christmas: How could appear a discrepancy in the biblical text between the 'peaceful God' and the 'fighting God'?¹⁸ The promised Saviour in the Old Testament prophecies was called 'The Prince of Peace'. (Isaiah 9,6: 'For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.'¹⁹) And this Saviour, Jesus Christ said: 'Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword.' (Matthew 10,34) The local Calvinist pastor interpreted this conflict that first we have to fight against the Evil and after our victory in the war – the peace will come. Jesus Christ will be the 'prince of peace' in the future, but now we have to fight for the faith and against the enemies of the faith. This type of interpretation was very popular, e.g. the well known biblical verse ('Put your sword back into its place. For all who take the sword will perish by the sword.' Matthew 26,52) was interpreted that our nation is only defenses and our enemies attacked first – so they took the sword first, and because of it they will perish by the sword.

Theologists often pointed out that the war was the consequence of turning away from God and sins but they always added that the sins leading to the war had been committed by other nations and not by Hungarians. The involvement in the war of the Hungarian nation could be justified through this aversive (self-apologetic) explanation. It was emphasized that it should be avoided to kill human beings – the only justification for it might only be if it was demanded for self-defense. Using weapons could only be the ultimate device and even then, the civilian population should be respected.

It is a further feature of these Calvinist church texts written at the time of the war that they invariably had a mobilizing character. The ministers declared war against indifference and depression, often mentioning that those staying at home should do their best just like those fighting in the front lines. In church meetings, it was a constant topic to what extent the horrors of war should be spoken about in the services. Everybody was preoccupied with this, it could not be treated as a marginal topic but if they spoke too vividly about the large number of casualties or the cities turned into heaps of rubble, congregation members got even more

¹⁸ N.S.B. [Nagy, Sándor Béla]: A Békesség Fejedelme. ['The Prince of Peace'] Világosság. Lelkipásztori üzenet a Sátoraljaújhelyi Református Egyházközség tagjaihoz. 1942. Karácsony. ['Light. Pastoral Message to the Members of the Sátoraljaújhely Calvinist Congregation. Christmas 1942'.] Sándor Béla Nagy: pastor, Sátoraljaújhely.

¹⁹ The biblical verses are from the *King James* translation, online: www.kingjamesbibleonline.org

frightened and disheartened in spite of the fact that the objective of the church was to preserve the order of society and activate it in a disciplined way. Especially at a time when ever greater efforts had to be made to give solace to the relatives of those who had died in the front lines. It was very important for the church that believers should not start to doubt in God's existence and victory, and discipline and the moral, Christian way of life should not slacken but become even stronger. ('Yes, in the war, it is not only human life that is cheap but honesty, moral integrity and chastity also often become cheap commodities.'²⁰) At the same time, they made it clear that sacrifices were also necessary for the victory of Christianity. ('We use the Bible to prove the truth that if the protection of our families and the nation requires, we shouldn't be reluctant to make the greatest sacrifice, sacrificing our own lives and our family members.'²¹) From 1942, everyday life underwent a complete change in provincial Hungary, as well. The keeping contact with the soldiers fighting in the front lines and giving consolation to those who stayed at home became the most important topics, and food and fuel shortage became more and more frequent while information was harder and harder to obtain. Ministers tried to take a strong line to maintain discipline, to prevent the spread of rumors and keep encouraging congregation members. They urged people to make donations to the victims' relatives and encourage and comfort one another.

There was no fundamental change in this from spring 1944, when the territory of the country became a battlefield. Up to the last moment, the majority of ministers talked about war objectives and the hope for victory. ('The best of our nation are resisting the devastation and fierce attacks of Bolshevism, which wants to eradicate every human value, culture, faith in God and life, at the Carpathians. The brave conduct of our soldiers in the external front lines and their readiness to fight coupled with a firm sense of duty has the result that although harassed by the bombings, we may still do our daily work in the internal front line, aimed at coming out victorious in the end.'²²) It is important to remark that while a lot of clergymen made an effort to save Jewish people, expressions of anti-Semitism can often be found in church publications in 1938 and even in 1944. All this may have contributed to the fact that basically, Hungarian society had an indifferent approach to deportations. (For example, one minister said even in June 1944 that the Jews themselves were to blame for their sufferings

²⁰ ENYEDY, Andor, Pásztorlevél a tiszáninneni református egyházkerület gyülekezeteihez és tagjaihoz. ['Pastoral Letter to the Members of the Cis-Tibiscian Reformed Diocese.'] Református Egyházi Értesítő, 15 January 1943. (Andor Enyedy: bishop of diocese.)

²¹ CSOMÁR, Zoltán, A hadbavonultak és hozzátartozóik pásztori gondozása, ['Spiritual Service for the Soldiers and their Relatives'] Lelkészegyesület, 26 June 1943. (Zoltán Csomár: pastor, Kistrót.)

²² Dean Gábor Fejes's speech. – Az Őrségi Református Egyházmegye 1944. évi augusztus hó 23. napján Körmenden tartott évi rendes közgyűlésének jegyzőkönyve, ['Diary of the General Assembly of the Reformed Dioece of Őrség on 23 August 1944.'] VÖRÖS, Lajos (ed.), Zalaegerszeg, s.d. s. 5.

because they were guilty and vicious as a community, represented the 'curse and destructive element of mankind',²³ and they should be converted to God.)

In autumn 1944, clergymen had to handle the problems of people fleeing from the Soviets. At the time of the Soviet military occupation, church life was suspended in most places. A large number of ministers and teachers also fled, and there was a lot of damage to church buildings. The short sources handed down from this period were only concerned with one topic: the grace of God.

To sum up, it can be concluded that in the Hungarian Calvinist church, the interpretation of war was clearly based on political considerations. Church resolutions were characterized by the dominance of the nationalistic viewpoint, clearly applying biblical messages to the current stages of the country's involvement in the war. In 1945, the church had to take a radical theological turn, for which it hardly had any time because of the emergence of the totalitarian communist regime. This, however, belongs to another topic area of interpretation.

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²³ KÖVÉR, Pál, Az aktuális ige, ['The Actual Biblical Verse.'] Sárospataki Református Lapok, 3 June 1944. s. 89–90.

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